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Centre de recherches pour le développement international

Findings from IDRC External Informant Interviews

Insights for IDRC's Strategic Positioning Exercise

A Report from GlobeScan

November 7, 2017



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List of Acronyms

ADB - Asian Development Bank
AIDs - Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ACIAR- Australian Centre for International Agriculture Research
AERC - African Economic Research Council
ARC - Australian Research Council
CDC - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CFAR - Center for Applied Rationality
CIDA - Canadian International Development Agency
CIHR - Canadian Institutes of Health Research
COP - Convening of Parties (Paris Agreement on Climate Change COP21)
DFID - Department for International Development
ECD - Early Childhood Development
EDCTP - The European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership
ESPA - Ecosystems Services and Poverty Alleviation
GrOW - Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women
HIV - Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IADB - Inter-American Development Bank
IDRC - International Research Development Centre
IFAD - International Fund for Agricultural Development
IRD - Institut de Recherche pour le Développement
IFA - International Fund for Agriculture
IMF - International Monetary Fund
JAISE - Journal of Ambient Intelligence and Smart Environment
LGBTI - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex people
MRC - Medical Research Council
NCDs - Non-Communicable Diseases
NOW - Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research
NGOs - Non-Governmental Organizations
NICFI - Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative
NIH - National Institutes of Health
NSERC - The Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada
OECD - Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development
ODA - Official Development Assistance
ODI - Overseas Development Institute
PhD - Doctor of Philosophy
PISA - Program for International Student Assessment
R&D - Research & Development
SDC - Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation
SDGs - Sustainable Development Goals
SIDA - Swedish International Development Centre
SSHRC - Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council
STEM - Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

STIs - Sexually Transmitted Infection
TRCN - The Research Council of Norway
UN - United Nations
UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund
USC - University of Southern California
USAID - United States Agency for International Development
WHO - World Health Organization

Executive Summary

The following report outlines key findings from consultations with 46 experts from across the world in the field of research for development (R4D). The overall goal of these consultations is to understand the current and future landscape of R4D and to help inform and guide the IDRC's strategic plan for 2015-2020.

Across the R4D world, the most significant shift and trends identified over the past several years include an increase in protectionism, a decline in public sector funding, the rise in private sector funding, and the emergence of new donors from the developing world. However, despite the emergence of these new donors, there is strong concern over the continued imbalance of power in setting the research agenda, where the Global North tends to dominate the Global South.

With the advent of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), there is an increasing recognition of the interconnected nature of development issues and the need for more holistic approaches. The growing trend of measuring societal impact and accountability, as well as the utilization of new technologies and big data to undertake new and innovative studies that were not possible in the past, is also mentioned.

Despite new technological advancements and research areas of investigation, the majority of experts believe that traditional grant funding is the dominant funding modality and the most effective modality for R4D. However, there is a growing recognition of the importance of partnerships, collaboration, flexibility, the widening of recipient types to non-academics, and allowing for long-term approaches.

When examining R4D gaps, interviewees echo the need for more research projects that incorporate an element of capacity building and knowledge sharing between the Global North and South. Many experts also lament that not enough R4D projects take a cross-sectoral, systems analysis or participatory approach in the design or implementation phase. Far too often, projects are narrowly focused on a specific outcome, without taking into consideration other dimensions.

Very few experts believe that any one area is well-funded. However, there is general consensus that global health receives a fair amount of attention, especially vaccines, HIV and non-sexually transmitted infections. On the other hand, the list of research areas mentioned as under-funded is vast and varied and includes such areas as the social sciences in general, genomics, climate change, obesity prevention, outcomes of mobile technology, non-communicable diseases, healthcare systems, and the ethical and global impacts of emerging technologies, to name a few.

Due to the IDRC's in-house expertise across many disciplines and its in-country presence across the world, interviewees believe the organization can have a lasting impact in several

areas, such as the economic and social implications of automation and artificial intelligence, the health needs of sexual minorities, metrics on adolescents, indigenous and community based research, migration of non-refugees, and the connection between the environment, conflict and local development.

The IDRC can also have a larger impact by more effectively encouraging the use of research in policy and decision making. This can be accomplished by mapping out current core policy discussion and connecting them with research projects, boosting the capacity of local governments to use and act on research, or simply training and incentivizing researchers to more effectively engage with and include policy makers and decision-makers in the design and execution of research projects.

When asked about the attributes of successful leading funders in the current R4D landscape, some of the most common characteristics revolve around being collaborative with how funds are managed, having a long-term approach to funding, being independent politically, and supporting interdisciplinary and innovative research. These are all characteristics that many experts have used to describe the IDRC.

Moreover, what many believe sets IDRC apart from other funders is that it is often credited with funding visionary projects, investing in the capacity building of Southern researchers and institutions, and taking risks where other funders are not willing to go; the example of the Think Tank Initiative is often mentioned in this regard. It is also perceived to be more nimble and agile than its larger counterparts in the Global North, often punching well above its weight due to its deep and varied institutional knowledge and expertise, and long-lasting relationships and networks in the development world. Its unique mandate is also mentioned and envied by some experts, as it allows the IDRC to have a great deal of freedom and independence from the Canadian government, while also maintaining close ties with decision-makers and policy makers. Its mandate also allows the organization to fund a wide array of projects and not restrict itself to specific disciplines, unlike many other funders.

However, there are opportunities for improvement and several experts mention that the IDRC needs to do a better job of being more visible by communicating more about the things that it does – particularly in the area of capacity building in the Global South, where the IDRC is considered to be a trailblazer and one of the few funders that has been focused and making progress. A few interviewees suggest that the IDRC needs to sharpen its narrative and tell a more compelling and urgent story that provides evidence of the results that have been achieved.

Overall, all experts that were consulted have a high degree of respect for the IDRC and believe it is in a good position to tackle nearly any development issue over the coming years. The majority also believe that it is on the right track and should continue to focus on its key strengths and find ways of scaling them up.

Background

In 2015, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) issued its strategic plan for the next five years, aimed at multiplying IDRC's impact and refocusing its investment in knowledge and solutions to improve lives in the developing world. The plan outlines three priorities: investing in knowledge and innovation to reach and empower more people via large-scale positive change, building the leaders for today and tomorrow and being the donor partner of choice for greater impact.

The world's most prominent government and private donor agencies seek out IDRC for collaboration, and these donor partnerships account for a significant and increasing share of the Centre's programming. However, the number of knowledge-sharing and -producing organizations has increased over the past 46 years of IDRC's existence, providing donors, partners and the research community with a wide variety of organizations with which to engage. The optimal positioning of the IDRC in this crowded landscape, particularly in the area of research for development, will be essential for the organization to meet its strategic priorities.

To aid in the execution of the strategic plan and to ensure that Canada's contributions around the world are recognized, IDRC wishes to more deeply understand the needs and expectations of its key stakeholders today, how it is seen in relation to other providers of development research and robustly define IDRC's unique value proposition in the international development space. Ultimately, this research will help IDRC inform its strategic decision-making in order to be more impactful with its funding over the coming years.

Objectives

The overall objective of this project is to provide strategic insights to help IDRC understand its current and potential position within the changing research for development landscape and how it can best leverage its resources to maximize its impact over the coming years.

To this end, IDRC commissioned GlobeScan, an independent stakeholder intelligence and engagement consultancy, to engage with a subset of 45 influential external stakeholders in the field of research for development, to better understand their perceptions and expectations of the organization and the research for development sector¹. More specifically, the project aims to answer key questions in four fundamental areas:

1. What are the most important shifts in research for development needs and trends in research funding to support global development?
2. Where are the current or emerging research for development gaps? Where is the research for development landscape overcrowded? What research areas offer strategic opportunities for IDRC to add value and achieve large-scale impact?
3. Who are the leading research for development peers in terms of impact and influence and what are their key attributes? How does IDRC compare and what can IDRC learn from other leading research for development institutions?
4. What modalities (e.g., types of research support and recipients) do other major research for development institutions use and why? Which research for development modalities have proven to be most effective in the opinion of external informants? Are there lessons for IDRC and implications? How can IDRC best add value?

¹ Please see Appendix A for details of methodology and sample

1 Shifts and Trends in the Research for Development Landscape

1.1 General Trends

Interviewees were asked for their views on what they see as the most important shifts in recent years when it comes to the research for development landscape and what trends might emerge in the coming years.

Protectionism and the decline in public sector funding

It was noted that in certain markets (e.g., USA, Australia), the recent move toward nationalism and “supporting things at home” is making multilateral, multi-country work more difficult or less likely. In certain markets, there is the feeling that funding decisions have become “more political” and development aid has declined, which negatively impacts ongoing research programmes.

“The volumes of ODA that we’ve been used to is drying up or is being redirected to migration problems of late. Or lots of it is going to private sector contractors.”

“At a time when we need to be cooperating more and more on these big problems, we actually have strong political forces wanting to take nationalistic and often xenophobic responses. ... There are people in our world who say that we need to be planning on the assumption that there will be no aid within about a decade.”

Growing concern about imbalance of power between Global North and South, with North setting the agenda

There has been a tendency among large funders for research funding calls to be

based on donor country priorities rather than on the priorities of the countries being supported, particularly when it comes to the Global South. It is felt that research priorities are not often enough being suggested or set by developing countries, resulting in an imbalance of power. Some feel that researchers in developing markets “essentially collect the data but are not involved in the analysis or publication, beyond being thanked in the footnotes.” Many identify a growing concern in the development community about this imbalance.

“The ideal partnership is one in which the recipient institute takes the lead.”

“Countries seem to be focusing on supporting things at home – it’s much more political. Showing our flags has become the fashion. We want to make sure it’s known that it’s either Sweden, Canada or Norway or whoever who provides the funding. It think it’s partly about showing results, (but it’s) also political decisions of course.”

“A professor from a university or some other think tank – sub-contract them, because there is no willingness to take a risk on these people. The funders I mentioned are ones that are willing to take a little bit of risk, but I think they are not taking enough.”

Important donors now emerging from markets that previously received aid

New funders have emerged in recent years from India, Mexico, China, etc., acting as important donors for their regions, investing in both domestic and international research.

The growth of private, grant-making foundations, along with the strengthening of technical expertise in emerging economies, is thought to be changing the funding landscape and disrupting traditional donor-recipient relationships.

“A big change is that the world looks very different. We now have lots of formerly poor countries that are upper middle-income countries, like China or India or Indonesia. So first, as a topic of research for development, they’re becoming somewhat less important, because in a sense, they are no longer really developing countries. At the same time, they are actually becoming important players in supporting research and funding research. And also, as commences the rise of these economies, one also sees a rise of research coming out of these economies, particularly in China, but also in India.”

Increased private sector funding, leading to a focus on applied research with short-term results

In contrast to the shrinking government aid budgets in certain markets, many mention the increased private philanthropic money now available. However, many feel that while private sector engagement is good for research that has a strong commercial impact, it is less supportive of longer-term research programmes focused on complex societal issues. The tendency is to move away from funding pure, basic research, focusing instead on applied research that will have immediate, tangible, quantifiable results and practical outcomes on the ground.

A number of experts argue that the public sector in particular should focus attention on long-term, systemic challenges.

“If there is interest in research, it tends to be very technically focused, like Gates Foundation’s interest in seeds, drugs and vaccines.”

“Everyone is focused on the results agenda.”

“Public funded institutions shouldn’t go there [to very specialized, applied research], because we do need the systems analysis.”

“The development story in Africa is seen to have changed a lot, moving away from the issues of auto-production, industry and agriculture to softer topics of governance, institutional reforms, etc. Funding should go back to understanding systemic issues – there is little money to support research on how countries should industrialize, for example.”

“The challenge is to try and keep alive the funding commitment to the interdisciplinary work, the work that is genuinely with local partners, and the work that’s about the social and political arrangements of development, as well as technical solutions. That space is narrowing, because many funders don’t want to commit for the long term and they don’t want to address complex things. They want quick simple wins.”

Capacity building increasingly recognized as important, but less well funded

The notion of capacity building has assumed much greater importance over the years – IDRC is seen by many as having been well ahead of the curve on this trend and this is recognized as a strength of the organization. However, despite this being seen as extremely important, there is a feeling that donors are moving away from financing overheads and general expenses to recipients or providing program support to organizations. Funding is now more “project-oriented.”

“This [capacity building] is disappearing under the guise of being more results oriented. They are trying to “projectize” funding.”

Increased demand for cross-disciplinary collaborations and partnerships

There is an increased demand for trans-disciplinary research – IDRC is again seen by some as being ahead of the curve in this regard, as it is not viewed as having a particular disciplinary focus. Cross-disciplinary partnerships, public-public and public-private partnerships and international consortia are also seen as highly important, although many note that much more can be done when it comes to such collaborations.

Indeed, one expert pointed to a shift in the prevailing theories of innovation over the last 20 years, away from innovation coming simply from lone researchers to one where idea generation emerges from rich “learning networks.” It was felt, however, that funders are not yet moving quickly enough in this direction.

A few respondents note that partnerships are particularly important for organizations like IDRC, where funds and manpower are more limited compared to larger institutions; it allows for the funding of larger programs that “add up to something bigger” rather than the funding of one-off studies.

“I still haven’t seen the programming platforms and the research and the funding priorities catch up with what I think is now a commonly held understanding of how discovery is made.”

“Many pay lip service to collaborative interdisciplinary work, but in practice they tend to prioritize more technically driven

science rather than work that gets at a complex problem.”

“African universities have gained strength over the past 20 years and we are now starting to see more collaboration between universities of the Global South and North to help develop researchers and PhD students.”

“Some of the funding agents specifically require research made up of different disciplines. You are seen as stronger if you have a team. I see that as a major change.”

“The ability to be strategic about what topic areas you’re focused on, and if that is an area where others are playing, to make sure you’re playing with them rather than trying to do something in parallel. In some ways, for Canada, all of our institutions need to be playing that game. We don’t have the amounts of money and people power that a lot of other institutions have around the world. At the same time, we can still have massive impact if we’re smart about how to deploy it.”

Attention to SDGs has led to wider framework focus – greater recognition of the interconnected nature of social problems in development and development issues being examined in a more holistic way

Many respondents point out that new areas of research are being fueled by the SDGs and their interdisciplinary nature. This is affecting what kind of research is funded and how research is done. It is thought that this will bring more collaboration to the development landscape, with development institutions thinking more about the complementarity of topics and research programs.

“People are rallying around the SDGs. Countries are looking at the SDGs as a time to transform their development strategies. It provides an opportunity to think about integrated development: how and why

climate change impacts global health and nutrition and poverty and conflict. They are all intertwined. We also see the idea of leaving no one behind – focusing on the bottom 20% of the world to eradicate 80% of the world's health disease burden."

"The SDGs are all about multi-sectoral, integrated approaches. I'm assuming and hoping, with the start of the SDG era and the strong push for multi-sectoral approaches, that multi-sectoral research will grow to meet that need."

"Development cannot be achieved if we are working in one area only."

"One of the big shifts has been to begin to understand from a research perspective the interconnected nature of many social problems in development. Whether they are health-related issues or security-related issues, they often are interconnected."

"There has been an expansion in frameworks, like not just dealing with health in a restricted medical sense, for example, but also looking at the social, economic and political governance of health. We have wider frameworks to deal with now."

Greater interest in measuring the societal impact of research

There is now greater demand from larger funders to measure, and thereby demonstrate, impact. The need for accountability is felt to be higher. The challenge is that impact is not simply about specific outcomes related to products, policies or on-the-ground efforts; there is heightened interest in looking at societal outcomes which are difficult to link back to said research, for example, in the realms of social justice, gender equity, economic equality, etc.

Linked to this, some feel more money has been going into funding trials in the field or field-based empirical policy evaluation – semi-controlled experiments to determine which policies and/or activities are effective at achieving originally stated goals.

"A greater sophistication and demand around how we actually move to impact. The need for accountability is higher as more and more public dollars go into this. There is also increased attention from some of the larger funders. I think that's one that all agencies will need to grapple with – how are they articulating what is the impact of the research they are funding?"

Progress on big data and new technologies is causing excitement in terms of how new points of information can be shared and used

Many respondents discuss the impact of new technologies coming from new spaces and the changing nature of information. Non-traditional players (e.g., mobile phone companies, start-ups, etc.) are using big data to examine a whole range of factors, driving forward interesting new lines of work that were not possible before. There is also a feeling that there is greater recognition by decision-makers of the usefulness of big data to inform decision-making and for accountability purposes.

"What is changing and is changing fast is the role of digital technology, social networking, new forms of organization, new forms of capital delivery and peer-to-peer financing. There are a lot of new things that are changing in many countries and developing landscapes."

"New players are using big data to examine a whole range of factors linked to SDGs. For instance, mobile phone operators have identified a link between a fall in pay-as-you-

go phone credit and a rise in food shortages. If the food supply is restricted, prices go up and there is less cash available in the community to spend on phone credit. Others, like Premise, look at real-time data from real monetary transactions to produce comprehensive data on what is happening to commodity prices in any part of the world. As a development planner, these are exciting new types of metrics that can help with societal predictions."

2 Development Gaps, the Balance of Funding and Opportunities for Achieving Large-Scale Impact

2.1 Research for Development Gaps

Several research for development gaps have been identified, with some relating to how funding is conceptualized or executed, while others focus on specific funding areas. This section provides an overview of some of the key themes and topics that were discussed.

2.1.1 Cross-sectoral and systems research

Convergence and collaboration among various disciplines in tackling development issues is often mentioned as a challenging and pervasive gap. Despite living in an increasingly interconnected world, it is perceived by many that **much of the research community continues to remain subdivided into specific disciplines** with limited cross-over. It is argued that many of the development challenges facing the world are multifaceted, with multiple complex drivers (e.g., climate change, childhood obesity, food security), and as such the development community needs multifaceted solutions.

Funding institutions are perceived to be part of this problem, as many grant-giving **institutions continue to maintain a narrow focus or concept of how a project should be run**, without considering how the research topic under investigation affects or is affected by other interconnected disciplines.

“The danger is we still see research as a project. You do a project and you move on. That may produce very interesting findings, but is it transforming lives and is it transforming lives in sustainable ways?”

“I think there are not too many research groups that I'm aware of where you have the agronomists working alongside epidemiologists or nutrition experts. There's a bit of an assumption in agriculture that we'll grow the food and it's not our fault if people eat too much of it or don't have sensible diets. That's up to the market. Yet I think if our research is leading these radically simplified farming systems where there are no longer any leafy green vegetables, and the assumption is that people go to the supermarket for those things, then I think we are part of the problem. We should be active here, and this is where our research is sometimes at odds with our partner countries.”

This tendency to focus on finding technical solutions without understanding how systems work is perceived to be widespread within the research community. For example, modern day slavery and trafficking of children is an issue where researchers would ideally look at a range of social, economic and governance factors that are driving the issue, rather than simply focusing on ways to intercept traffickers. Ideally, researchers work with vulnerable communities, with businesses and supply chains to find alternatives. Real progress can only happen once there is a proper understanding of how all related issues tie together.

Another example shared is early childhood development, where one should take into account a myriad of other dimensions that relate to the issue such as agriculture, nutrition, security, safety, etc.

“I think research funders can really play an important role in trying to make sure that, beyond the individual studies and papers, we’re actually learning across the whole field.”

Migration, refugees, conflict, climate change and the building of resilient health systems in particular are all challenges mentioned by interviewees that require modalities and approaches that bring different disciplines and sectors together.

“All of these [development issues] require modalities and approaches that are doing some of the things we’ve been talking about; bringing different disciplines and specialisms together, bringing different countries together so that you can have comparative learning across different sites, working in partnership in ways that connect northern and southern institutions and connect research and policy and practice organizations and probably have an element of capacity building built into them.”

Furthermore, one expert believes that it is time for the research community to **start searching for more universal approaches** since **many of the challenges in the world of development are affecting both the Global North and South**, such as climate change or inequality.

“Another area of research might simply be trying to map who are those relevant actors and who will they be in the future. My intuition is that in ten, twenty, thirty years’ time, people will look at us all a bit curiously if we say we’ve been working in

development because people think, “what is that?” Some of those challenges that we’re facing are clearly universal, whether it is climate change or extreme inequality, and some arbitrary difference between how we might approach those same challenges in the developing world or in the Global North and the rest of the world may not make sense. We need much more interesting universal approaches.”

“We know inequality and insecurity that is starting to wreak economic and political havoc in all parts of the world require us to take that much more of a universal approach to this. My reading is that so many of the development institutions, particularly the development research sector, do not know how to do that. They can analyze inequality in developing countries until the cows come home but have no idea or are unprepared to think through commonalities or differences between what is happening in different parts of the world. Funding that sort of universal approach to some of the questions or issues that we thought to be in the development sector might be timely.”

However, searching for universal solutions or planning to ensure that each dimension is accounted for in research can be quite challenging. Measurement, evaluation and determining accountability on such projects can also be quite complex, as well as how to scale up cross-disciplinary studies. According to many, this **underscores the importance of building partnerships, engaging in knowledge sharing and supporting capacity building.**

2.1.2 Knowledge transfer and capacity building

Capacity building of individual researchers, research institutions and government in the Global South is cited by many as an area neglected by many funders – with the IDRC

and its Think Tank Initiative being one of the often-mentioned exceptions. Funders are perceived to be focused on funding research into specific topic areas with short-term objectives, rather than committing to longer-term funding that can help strengthen the ability of local researchers and institutions to conduct their own research and develop theories that are more in line with the local context. To bolster capacity building in the developing world, a number of interviewees call for **more long-term core funding of institutions that are not tied to specific projects or outcomes.**

“We tend to use theories, conceptual frameworks that have been developed by researchers from the Global North. In India, we are not really doing theory-building work here. It is an area that we feel is important. A part of that larger capacity building effort. I don’t see any funding in that space.”

“I think some of IDRC’s most effective programs have actually been where they’ve supported research that connects up those low cost Southern-based institutes with some of those in the Global North who are able to bring in different perspectives.”

Knowledge sharing is one way to support capacity building and many believe that funders of research for development are failing in this regard. Several experts believe there is a **serious gap or imbalance in terms of knowledge sharing and knowledge platforms between the developed and developing world**, particularly for Africa and Asia where health initiatives tend to dominate the landscape of funding.

In the developed world, there are several platforms for idea circulation and capacity building for researchers, such as the Fulbright and Rhodes scholarships. Both are

platforms that allow for the exchange of talent, ideas and capacity building and it is rare to find such equivalents in the developing world. However, one example shared is Brazil’s Science Without Borders program, which sent over 100,000 Brazilian students abroad to study science, technology, engineering and mathematics internationally. It is argued that getting students to institutions for study or exchange purposes goes a long way to developing research capacity in the developing world.

“Anything that it [IDRC] can do to promote mobility either of researchers in Canada into developing areas or developing area researchers and students to Canada, or elsewhere, I think is something that should be prioritized.”

Another example of a knowledge gap between the Global North and South is in the education sector. The OECD’s Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) is one such example. PISA is a survey which evaluates education systems by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students. It is considered a valuable program, but its entire architecture and much of its focus is in the developed world and there is no such equivalent in the Global South.

“Now you have basically a conversation about how Finland can become a better school system, but no one is talking about Tanzania or Mozambique or Afghanistan.”

Some argue that the reason for this imbalance is due to minimal effort on the part of researchers from the Global North reaching out to institutions from the Global South for partnership or collaboration on development issues. It is perceived that funders of research are part of the problem, as they tend to focus on finding researchers

from established institutions in developed countries who will tackle issues in the developing world, rather than finding researchers from within the developing world to act as the lead investigators. Some say that the reason for this imbalance is that it can be difficult to find institutions in the developing world that have the capacity to be long-term anchors on specific issues. This further reinforces the importance of capacity building among researchers and institutions in the Global South.

To help overcome this gap, funders are encouraged to **become brokers that can build and support long-term partnerships and platforms for sharing knowledge** within and between the developed and developing world.

Within applied research, it is also stressed that wherever possible, the **research should be participatory by involving the beneficiaries of the research**. Engaging with the target population to identify the problem or refine the research question and collectively analyzing the data and drawing conclusions are considered imperative for the success of a project.

“I would say if you took systematically the key professions that you thought would be important for any nation to develop and you look at the global research infrastructure being brought to bear in the developing world on those professions, I think you would see we are massively lacking. Teaching, public health, law, judiciary, government, civil society leadership, media and communications, journalism, nursing. Forget it. Management. Architecture. Human settlements. Absent.”

Finally, research that aims to **support the capacity of Southern governments** is

mentioned by several experts as a substantial gap and an area that can lead to big gains. In particular, a focus on research into capacity building that can help governments manage limited budgets for effective long-term planning.

“A lot of countries have to make hard decisions with limited budgets. I was just in East Timor. They have the highest burden of under nutrition in the world. Of a 1.4-billion-dollar budget that they spend a year, they spend \$90,000 on nutrition. Yes. They spend half of their budget on infrastructure because they think that's the way to economic growth. I think their budgeting is in need of reform. Thinking long-term about: What does it mean to be a sustainably developing country? What do you want to invest in? Do you want to invest in roads or do you want to invest in a knowledge-based economy? ... There's not a lot of capacity in these countries to do this kind of long-term planning.”

“I think there's been a lot of research on building the evidence base of what works to improve nutrition or to protect ecosystems or reduce poverty. But there's been hardly any investment in the sustained capacity to be able to deliver on improvements and developments. Look at nutrition, there's very little capacity at governance level. There is very little capacity in the health sector and the agriculture sectors or ministries to design programs and policies and then very little capacity at the front-line level.”

2.2 The Balance of Funding for Development Research

2.2.1 Research Areas That Are Well Funded

Few experts believe that there are any areas that are overfunded. However, many do mention that one area that is generally well funded is **global health**. Issues related to vaccines, HIV, and non-sexually transmitted infections such as tuberculosis and malaria are believed to be well funded, as well as clinical research in general. It is noted by some that global epidemics such as the Zika virus can have the effect of drawing a substantial amount of attention and funding for an extended period of time, to the detriment of other areas.

“Global health continues to be at the forefront of where things are going. I don’t think that’s necessarily a bad thing, but my worry is that it’s being driven by a very minimalist view. It is global health defined as saving lives rather than advancing well-being.”

“We are finally starting to see more attention to ‘Thrive’ rather than ‘Survive’.”

“I think absolutely basic and clinical research is the one that receives the most. I think that there is an increasing appreciation for implementation research.”

Funding for research into **climate change and renewable energy** is also perceived to be fairly strong; although some acknowledge that there are specific areas within climate research that are underfunded.

“On climate, I don’t know the investment as well, but I think a lot of cities and states in the United States for example are stepping

up to fill the gap of Trump pulling out of COP. But I think globally there is a lot of momentum around climate funding.”

When asked about overfunded areas, a few experts point out that the **issue is not overfunding but rather waste in funding**. The argument is that in many cases, not enough effort goes into the assessment of research questions or the quality of the research. Knowledge of what has already been done is often imperfect and as such there is much duplication and unnecessary research that has been done before.

“In research, it’s very difficult to say that something is overfunded. Nobody has that. But what I can say is that there is a lot of waste in research. That is something for all of donors to pay attention to.”

“Reducing research waste. Very few look into this. IDRC could make a mark. Most research is wasted because it is not used at all or not reported in a way that is helpful. This is not looked into. IDRC could be an agency for change here.”

On the whole, most interviewees could not or would not mention any specific sectors or areas that are overfunded, simply due to the belief among most that nothing is truly overfunded.

2.2.2 Research Areas That Are Underfunded

Areas that are perceived by experts to be underfunded are vast and varied.

Social Science-Related

The **social sciences and humanities** in general are often mentioned as being short

of funding and they are important areas that can help researchers understand the social, cultural or historical dynamics surrounding a development challenge.

“Very often we have technical solutions or innovations or health-based solutions for problems without thinking through the social science application of it.”

For example, it is important to understand the social implications of any new drug, technology or technique when it is employed in a rural setting in Africa or a highly urbanized setting in Latin America. In short, it is **not just about the generation of knowledge, but also about its application** and not thinking about this after the event.

“If you’ve got the drug, would people actually take the drug or if you go to the technology, would people use it the way the engineers designed it to be used? What are the social implications of the technology, of the act that is being constructed? It seems to me that often social science is seen as an afterthought rather than embedded in the actual research work that is entailed.”

Areas such as **governance and social welfare structures** are believed to be poorly supported. Less outwardly visible issues, such as the **everyday nature of insecurity within vulnerable communities**, are also often overlooked.

“I suppose my plea is really about the more mundane and everyday nature of insecurity, vulnerability and inequality and how development-based research can help address some of the problems of that much more everyday nature of it. In some sense, it is potentially low level from a media perspective, but for the many people it effects, it is not low level. The everyday nature of it makes it pervasive, makes it

fundamentally affect the way in which people live or undermine their wellbeing.”

Research on **gender** is also mentioned as one area that has been steadily getting more attention, but would still benefit from greater focus, especially since it is also a cross-sectoral issue.

“There are all sorts of areas where they [IDRC] could make a mark. One would be in these kinds of demographic, population issues. Maybe also in gender issues, where they are already quite active, and could make a bigger splash.”

“I hope funds will follow the broader and more holistic development that areas like gender equality have brought about, and that there will be more interest in research that is more holistic in perspective but I’m not sure it will happen.”

“There is lots of talk about gender, but what does it really mean? Can IDRC pull it all together?”

Science-Related

Within Canada, the area of **genomics** research is mentioned as an area that is particularly underfunded and recent advancements in the mapping of genomes have led and will continue to lead to significant changes in the future of agriculture, health and other areas in both the Global North and South.

“Talking about microbes that clean up mining sites and things like that is the next wave and we have to bring society along because society has real ethical, legal issues with that, and rightly so. I think that is another big wave of research and development that needs to be supported in the right way.”

“I know it is very contentious and risky but there are very few people in the world, very few donors in the world who have the luxury to be able to talk about this. IDRC is one of them. That area could be biotechnology. Or transgenic research. I know IDRC has not been very vocal about it.”

Energy, Climate and Agriculture

Energy is also an area that needs more of a focus in terms of the **convergence of food, water and energy in rural landscapes**. Most of the energy research is being done in engineering schools of universities or companies such as Tesla, who have no engagement whatsoever in the food sector or in rural land use. Funding into research on how we transition into renewables without compromising the food or water supply will be increasingly important.

“Agriculture is a big energy user, so we need farming systems that are designed much more around renewables than around diesel. Farms of the future will grow energy and food in integrative ways and hopefully in ways that are kinder on biodiversity and water resources than the current approaches. But I don’t know of any research groups that are looking at that whole question.”

Although climate change is gaining ever more attention and momentum in global discourse, some believe that there is still a lot more that needs to be done. Generally, there is a call for a **greater balance between research for climate change mitigation and adaptation**. According to some, the majority of research funding is flowing toward mitigation rather than adaptation, and this is likely due to political reasons.

Interviewees also believe more support is needed to **develop the capacity of climate research centres**, such as training of staff on climate modelling, and the development of climate information services that are adapted to particular sectors such as agriculture to better inform farmers’ decision-making. One expert believes that – considering the impact of climate change – **R&D funding in the agriculture sector** is underfunded, particularly if one considers that investing in this area has historically had high returns on boosting agricultural productivity overall.

“Historically, you need this maintenance in investment [in R&D] just to keep agriculture at pace with disease and population and all the rest. But we know that that pace has got to increase, as we see the global challenges increasing – not least of which is climate change and the impact that is having and will continue to have on agriculture. We also know that the rate of gain that we’ve seen over the past decades in productivity of crops or animals is slowing. That becomes quite troubling, because we’re running out of options the way we’ve been investing in the past.”

Additionally, some experts say that **too much of the current climate research is with a Northern perspective** and that more involvement is needed from the Global South. This will become a growing concern as the Global South is often worst hit by extreme weather events due to climate change. As such, **research into how communities can be more resilient and prepared for natural disasters** is highly important. This same point also applies to countries that are burdened with high insecurity or conflict. Finding out **how to foster development in countries that will be impacted the most by climate change, but that are also embroiled in conflict** and insecurity will become increasingly important.

“Then there are some harder places to know how to move forward. They include the South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, Afghanistan. Again, on the climate side some of these countries are going to be more impacted by climate than others. They are already suffering from conflict and lack of government and all of these types of things but also where agriculture is the only opportunity for livelihood in the moment. The research question is there, the big one is how do you get these places to develop?”

Health-Related

Within the health sector, **non-communicable diseases (NCDs)** is mentioned by some as a severely underfunded area, particularly when looking at the proportion of funding it receives out of global health, which is stated by one expert to be in the range of 1.5%-3%. This is despite the fact that the majority of diseases in the world, particularly in the poorest countries, are NCDs.

Another area noted is research into **better integrating healthcare systems** in the developing world so they are less vertical; for example, moving away from acute care systems to more long-term care and management as patients get older.

“Not a lot of funding goes into health system research – this is what we need to know: that research is being used as it was intended. Strengthening health systems.”

Research that can help bring about **more equity within healthcare systems in terms of access and quality of care** is also mentioned, particularly in Latin America. In fact, equity in health systems is believed to be an emerging trend within the SDGs compared to the Millennium Development Goals.

“We also need more equity in the distribution of research in these areas – maternal and child health is essential for improving quality of life – nevertheless, implementation and putting evidence into practice has been limited. Particularly on accessing health systems – how to create health systems that are efficient and sustainable. How to apply important findings into practice.”

Canada’s development of systemic reviews of its healthcare system are applauded and considered to be innovative in how it captures a whole host of important datasets on its healthcare system. The funding of research that can help to replicate such systemic reviews in developing countries would have a great impact.

“In the past 10 years there has been big growth in health policy and systems research, looking not only into how to deliver an intervention but how we build capacity to do things. It’s not just about diagnostic tests, but about the enhancement of the health system itself. Canada has been at forefront of those developments. We expect them to continue to fund methodological interventions and capture things like race, education, gender to assess equity in a systematic review. Canada is a leader here, sometimes with support from IDRC.”

Measuring the resilience of healthcare systems is also mentioned as an area that is severely under-researched. **Understanding how a system responds to pressure during a crisis such as political instability, migration, conflict, etc.** is highly important in order to transform and strengthen healthcare systems in the developing world that are more vulnerable to such pressures. In particular, looking at **how healthcare systems have successfully innovated in difficult or challenging circumstances** is something that

is rarely researched but could be hugely beneficial if applied to other countries.

“We need more research on innovation. For example, due to the embargo in Cuba they developed their own vaccines and exported them to other countries. The same with the AIDS epidemic in Brazil – the high prices from pharma forced them to develop their own biopharma industry. There is little research on that – for us to understand how to apply these success to other countries and bring positive results from one country to other countries.”

Obesity prevention is also mentioned by interviewees as one of the most challenging areas within health and it is an area that would benefit from more systematic global cooperation, as it cuts across many issues and will be very costly for the healthcare systems in the long run.

“Every country is affected by obesity. No one has been able to reduce it...yet there’s almost zero funding going to obesity prevention. It’s less than 1% of overseas development systems. It is crazy. If you look at [...] where health funding goes, from the overseas development assistance, it doesn’t match the burden. I think there’s a need for more investment overall and then on top of that, effective spending.”

Research into **people living with disabilities** is another cross-cutting issue that is fairly neglected in the developing world. An example shared is how to communicate with deaf or blind people during natural disasters such as earthquakes or floods.

Other areas mentioned within health that would benefit from additional research funding include: chronic disease, health issues related to women who are not of reproductive age, self-care, ageing in

developing countries, nutrition, maternal and neo-natal health, occupational health and safety, and mental health.

Technology-Related

Within the technology sector, a few areas are mentioned that are lacking in funding. Some believe not enough research has been done into the current outcomes of technology. For example, research into looking at concrete **outcomes of mobile technology in the developing world**. Often, many assumptions are made of the benefits of mobile technology, but not a lot of research has been done on the outcomes or to quantify the benefits, which is difficult because of access issues.

“More understanding of the impact of mobile internet. As a research company, I would say we have been riding on a wave of hope. If you have access to high-speed internet through your mobile phone, what is really going to change? Are you going to have more opportunities? Are you going to have better job options? Are you going to have more access to education? All of these things, we are making a lot of assumptions, but we have never looked at concrete outcomes, which is not that easy.”

Similarly, the move towards automation has meant there is much focus now on jobs and the **future of work**, but not enough attention or **solutions on how to address current employment issues** caused by technology.

Metrics and Measurement

Moving away from specific research areas, interviewees believe that funding studies that **examine the changing donor landscape** would be highly beneficial. Historically, funding for research was dominated by

bilateral funders, whereas now it is far more diverse with some big funders emerging from the Global South. Understanding who the new players are (both national and local), and how they are innovating and what is making them successful, could be invaluable for traditional funding institutions.

“The emergence of investments from countries like China, it's hard to get clear information on what's happening there. The diminishing importance of traditional donors, the Europeans, the North Americans, the Australians... their investment into R&D globally and the capacity of those regions is diminishing over time, and being supplanted by new capacities in China, or India, or elsewhere. These are important structural shifts at a high level.”

Funding for research or simply the collection of **metrics on adolescents** is perceived to be devoid of any significant funding and where investments by the IDRC could have a considerable impact. There is much discourse on adolescents, because they are such a large proportion of the population in the Global South and they are the way of the future, but there is little support for research or data collection in this area.

“Trying to get funding for research on adolescents is surprisingly difficult. It's an area where countries, including Canada, talk the talk very well, but we struggle to get funding to do research into adolescence. I think there's funding to fund service delivery programs to adolescents, particularly in-school programs, but in terms of doing the research to inform those programs, it's hugely difficult.”

Finally, supporting **national or local collection and analysis of data** in developing countries is perceived to be generally underfunded. It is argued that many institutions and

governments in the Global South are at a point now where they need support in building up their own statistical systems and censuses, so they can pull reliable local data which they can use for effectively measuring and reporting on the impact of programs. Research into finding ways of taking advantage of the latest advancements in technology to lower the cost of setting up these data collection systems and rolling them out in the developing world would be invaluable.

“I think, globally, metrics and measurement are underfunded. If you look at all the amount of funding, including in Canada's maternal and child health program under Stephen Harper. They talked about several billions of dollars on spending on maternal and child health, but very little of that was focused on helping countries measure and report progress. They spent a lot of it on expensive consulting reports, and asking people like Price Waterhouse and others, to do accounting of progress. It's just nonsense.”

“If you go to Tanzania, quite frankly they would say, ‘Look. We don't need another \$3,000,000 from you in bed nets. There are lots of global NGOs that are doing that. What we would like is to know how you do the census in Canada so well, and how can we develop something that works as well as the census, and use it for decision making?’”

2.3 Where the IDRC Can Have the Largest Impact and Add Value

2.3.1 Where the IDRC Can Add Value

Investing in Capacity of Global South

Several interviewees believe that the IDRC is currently on the right track with its funding, especially with regards to **investing in institutions and researchers in the Global South** and that the organization should simply do more of what it is currently doing to have a greater impact.

“IDRC has already invested in some areas, like operational research in networks, in financing networks. Many funders don’t want to go into this area, which I think is of value, as well as helping to consolidate networks of research centres, especially in the South, potentially with some entering from the North.”

“I really hope that they continue funding the kind of things that I think IDRC is known for: on climate change and ecosystems and environment, focusing on poverty reduction and food systems. Traditionally, I really liked what the IDRC funded. To me, the kind of work they do feels a niche that a lot of other funders are not doing.”

Peer-to-Peer Learning

Within its funding models, some interviewees suggest the IDRC could deliver greater value by allowing **small grantees to come together in workshops to share learnings**, and over time **build a community of practice** that has a bigger impact overall. The example of IDRC’s Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women (GrOW) is one such case where individual grantees received relatively small budgets, but they had mechanisms in place

to collaborate and share knowledge with other grantees.

“Picking a theme and bringing grantees together, perhaps with other players who have worked in the space, to enable more than the sum of the parts could be a way for IDRC to punch above its weight and have key conceptual impact in a few areas.”

Long-term tracking

Additionally, several experts believe that there are simply not enough funders who are willing or have the capacity to **support long-term tracking studies**. For example, randomized control trials of people over 5, 10 or 20 years to measure long-term impacts on human capital formation and labor productivity, economic outcomes and inter-generational poverty, tax revenues and cost effectiveness – these would be particularly helpful for economists.

Higher Risk Projects

When questioned around specific topic areas, some believe the IDRC has the capability to **support riskier and more cutting-edge projects**. One example is around **sexually transmitted infections that are not HIV**. This is an area that is generally ignored by the funding community, often due to political reasons. Similarly, there is also a great need for more research on the **health needs of sexual minorities** and issues in the LGBTI community.

“There are some funders that feel so strongly about access to abortion, they fund and they fund generously. Whereas with sexually transmitted infections, there’s no jumping. No one goes out and says, ‘Yes, we’ve got to do something about STIs.’ It really is extremely hard to get anything around that. For me, that’s probably my biggest funding

headache. We run a political-based research program.”

“IDRC is, of course, a much smaller player in terms of its overall funding amounts. It has played, historically, a catalytic role in some key areas. So, I think IDRC, historically has been known to be a good catalyst for some ideas. It doesn’t have the scale and funding to be able to really scale them up. But I don’t think that’s an inappropriate role, given the limited budgets. I think the alignment of country focus with IDRC research priorities has been too much. They really need to focus on priority research areas, and risky research, which might well be catalytic, that NIH and Wellcome Trust might be more reluctant to take up, for example.”

Whole System Impacts of Technology

Within the tech sector, one expert suggests the IDRC could add value by **investigating the ethical and global impacts of emerging technologies**. The synthetic biology field is one case where scientists are now able to produce hydrocarbons by yeast production. However, the yeast needs sugar, which is most easily derived from sugar cane in South America. Rainforests are chopped down to make way for these sugar plantations, which decrease animal and plant biodiversity as well as livelihoods that rely on the rainforest. It is a complex issue that requires greater support to understand the ethical and social dimensions of new technologies and how their effects can go beyond any single country.

“The balancing of that [emerging technology] and initiating research that is of an ethical-legal type, that provides evidence and then communicates that evidence to all stakeholders. That way, we stop thinking about a country but we start thinking about the world when it comes to technological development. I think this is a big issue that

an organization like IDRC should think about.”

Experts also mention the need for more research on the **economic and social implications of increasing automation and artificial intelligence**. Many believe the IDRC is well placed to be more forward looking than other funders to see what challenges lie ahead due to the fact that they have a number of highly respected researchers working in-house and also abroad in country offices.

“I think they’re in a position to be able to be a bit forward looking, or looking at the new challenges ahead of us. Really taking a step back to see where are the needs and to try to sort of address needs as they are coming to birth and spearheading things.”

“I think these days we know that we’re moving to a society that is heavily automated. The old mechanical based society that we’re used to is going to be phased out. I think countries that invest in training their population in dealing with data and science will have a real advantage. We see examples like Korea, Singapore, where they invested heavily in schools, in training, in STEM [science, technology, engineering, math]. They had a big payoff afterwards.”

“I’m also thinking in terms of artificial intelligence, robotics, big data. How will that impact on development? I think that’s an area where there is a great scope for research for understanding more.”

Areas where the Canadian perspective would be an asset

A number of interviewees suggest that the IDRC can add some of its greatest value in subject areas that relate to the Canadian experience. For example, there are great

opportunities to make a big difference in **indigenous and community-based research**, two areas that are strongly linked and often overlooked by funders.

Another example mentioned is the **migration and effective integration of non-refugee vulnerable migrants**, which is seen as a growing issue. It has been receiving attention of late, but mainly among academics, and it is an area that would benefit from additional funding. In particular, research funding to help to understand and change the narrative in the Global North is imperative, as a large portion of public opinion is negative toward migrants. It is argued that Canada is generally viewed as an inspiring source of positive migration policies, not just for refugees, but for immigration generally and this could be another niche area for the IDRC.

“Let’s get back to Trump’s wall. Building a wall is not going to stop whatever the perceived problem was around migrants coming in. People will find a way. Maybe they will get on boats and come across the Gulf of Mexico, washing up on the beaches in Louisiana. Those sorts of things it would be nice to see IDRC looking at in their portfolio. Are you really looking at these really difficult questions where research should be giving an answer?”

Similarly, it is believed that a trusted outside perspective could bring great gains in Latin America, with regards to tackling the challenge of **corruption**. IDRC could potentially focus its efforts here by helping to build a more sustainable and transparent relationship between the private and public sector, through the facilitation and encouragement of establishing healthy conversations. It is argued that a new creative approach needs to be brought to the

field to break the cycle of scandals and a diminishing democracy.

Another important issue in this region would be to look at the **connection between the environment, conflict and local development**. Not a lot of organizations want to be involved and this is an area where external help is needed to think of alternatives and how to tackle these challenges. Identifying which approaches could be successful and how one can line up security elements with development elements would be most beneficial. IDRC could add much value here due to its strong brand and trust/respect that people have in the organization in a world where trust is rapidly diminishing. Many experts who we have spoken with believe that there is a lot of goodwill toward Canada and the IDRC right now.

“I think that they have a great brand. I think that there is something particular and special about Canada. That can perhaps be a better exploited. One feature of the world we’re in seems to be an almost universal reduction of trust. Canada probably enjoys a little bit more trust than many other places. That is something to think about.”

2.3.2 How Research-Funding Institutions Can More Effectively Promote and Encourage the Use of Research in Policy and Decision-Making

Encouraging and promoting the use of research in policy and decision-making is an ever-constant challenge, according to most interviewees. In the past, research was not necessarily aligned to policy, with research being funded, designed and executed in complete isolation from policy makers or

decision-makers. According to many, this still occurs today, but to a lesser degree and there is a growing awareness among funders that **policy makers or those who can implement the research on the ground need to be more involved** throughout the process.

“It is about involving the users of research. Obviously, involving people on the beneficiary side is crucial. It’s not like do the research, give it to a policy maker, prime minister takes it and then they rationally use that as evidence. Often you will see that people have a lack of understanding about the political economy they are working in, so it is about having those sorts of skills and knowing if this research gets taken up, who is going to benefit from this and who is not going to benefit.”

Some experts believe that the involvement of policy makers or decision-makers in the design and execution of the project, or in determining whether there are outcomes on the ground as a result of the research, should be **incorporated as a requirement in the grant and a condition of final payment**.

“IDRC could force researchers as part of their deliverables to have clear outcomes on informing policy and they have to demonstrate how they would do that in their applications. They have to deliver on that to receive the last payment of their grant or something. That could be quite powerful. IDRC could be quite directive in the grant requirements of really linking whatever those research outcomes are to policy. Policy makers will never read the peer review article (that usually comes out of these things).”

Interviewees also believe the IDRC could be a strong facilitator by **proactively mapping current core policy discussions and tying them in with research projects**. These

mapping exercises can also help researchers effectively find change agents within the government. Often, data alone is not enough to bring about change, and one must also engage with the right people in government.

“Research looking at what big questions policy makers themselves are looking for answers to. And also how there could be a way to disseminate research more broadly to facilitate networks of policy makers that would exchange and would be a place, a forum, for interaction with researchers, especially national research.”

“The researchers that are sitting within government are, by proximity and by their own understanding of the issues and the context, hugely influential.”

According to one expert, the 2016 international feminist policy review which led to the Feminist International Assistance Policy is a successful example of encouraging the use of research, and the IDRC played a strong role here by making sure that their think tanks participated in all consultations and debates. Different groups invited them to give advice and share the latest research on inequality. IDRC was also good at connecting with upper echelons of decision-makers throughout government.

In the Global South, boosting the capacity of governments to be more strategic in their outlook and give them the ability to rely more on evidence-based information in decisions/actions is crucial to transforming research into real action on the ground.

An example of the Ministry of Health in Rwanda is given where the government staffed the Ministry with strategically minded personnel and required all projects to be cleared by the Ministry – only those that were

evidence-based and aligned with the goals of the Ministry were approved.

Showing the pros and cons of policies and using live examples are also effective in shaping policy, increasing awareness and action. An example of the extractive industry is given, where Norway has benefited while Peru and Nigeria struggle to benefit from their extractive industries. These live examples have led to cross-market learning and the revision of national legislation in some countries in West Africa.

Further advice from interviewees is to better **train and support researchers so they know how to engage effectively with government**, such as sharing **concise one-page summaries** of their research rather than lengthy academic papers, and also ensuring that they engage at the right time and with the right people.

2.3.3 The Role that Research-Funding Institutions Should Play in Contributing to the SDGs

Broad Contributions

All interviewees believe that research-funding institutions can contribute greatly to the advancement of the SDGs. Some see an opportunity for the IDRC in particular to **support the measurement of progress on the SDGs from the very top of government down to the municipal and community level**, as well as into the **linkages between the SDGs**, an area which is often overlooked but is vitally important.

“One of the big struggles of the SDGs is also to monitor and evaluate whether the SDGs are working out. Are the goals being served? Basically, not waiting to the end point but

constantly as we go along, evaluating what is working out and what is not working out, at country level and beyond. To constantly keep an eye on the SDG impact and achievements and the lack of it. I think IDRC could perhaps play a role there.”

Measurement of progress in terms of what works or does not in practice is mentioned by a fair number of experts as a way to help advance the SDGs. For example, research into how countries can best achieve and measure universal healthcare, which would entail looking into access to quality care, essential health services, medicines, vaccines, etc.

However, the IDRC is seen by some as an organization that is nimble enough and with a wide array of expertise to not only measure progress but also **help shape the SDG agenda**.

“Join up each SDG research agenda to establish an overall strategy and country specific actions aligned to them.”

More research is also called for in **examining who the trailblazers are** on implementing the SDGs. Many in the Global South have been very creative and more proactive in implementing the SDGs. It's important to learn how they are doing it.

Specific Areas of Contribution

When questioning on specific areas that would most support the SDGs, research into the **provision of clean water for agriculture and human purposes**, especially off-grid sanitation approaches and their impact on health outcomes, is mentioned. Finding solutions around these questions will help to achieve a number of the SDGs.

Investigating behaviour change, such as how cultures and social norms are formed and

potentially shifted, is also mentioned as a cross-cutting issue that can have a beneficial impact on many SDGs.

Understanding how to **implement research on early childhood development** (ECD) is also mentioned by a few experts as a critical area of investigation. Effective ECD has been proven to lead to much greater outcomes across the board and many countries in Africa want to strengthen ECD but they are not sure how.

Post-harvest loss or food waste are two other areas mentioned that are fairly neglected in agriculture research, but critical to food security, nutrition, health and environmental impact. A great deal of food is lost in transit from the farm to the table. If this loss is reduced, there will be economic implications for grocery stores, implications for farmers in terms of how many crops they should now grow, particularly farmers in the developing world, as well as consumers. IDRC could play a niche role here.

“In the UK three million gets lost by supermarkets, two million is lost by farms through pest disease, eleven million is lost when it gets to our kitchen. Again, it’s measuring progress on sustainable development. It’s not the SDGs targets, it’s much deeper than that. How do we make it more efficient? If we go to a more sustainable food system with low net emissions and resilience, there are some really hard questions to be asked there which I think a lot of research isn’t asking.”

Within Canada, some mention that priorities related to the SDGs should be **indigenous issues, women’s issues and climate change**, and that it is important to see where Canadian implementation and global

implementation can go hand in hand and where research can support both.

2.3.4 The Role that Research-Funding Institutions Should Play in Contributing to Key Debates and Discussion Surrounding the SDGs

Interviewees strongly suggest that the IDRC could play an active role in contributing to the SDGs by **being present in conversations around local research capacity building and local leadership capacity** to strengthen problem solvers, researchers and leaders’ capabilities to make progress over the coming five to ten years.

“IDRC needs to really, really make their presence felt. I know how much work they have been doing over the years, the kind of value they have added to the countries. But I think they need more visibility. They need to work closer with the government. They need to invest more into advocacy type work as well. I see that as really a big gap.”

Taking part in dialogues and creating platforms for interaction with different **constituencies**, to bring in a wide range of perspectives when discussing key issues, is also seen as an area where IDRC could play an important convening role.

“Some kind of forum for having ongoing information sharing and some light coordination would be helpful.”

“I think there’s a greater potential today for research and researchers to be part of the dialogue and the recognition of research is actually more emphasized. I think also the science, technology, innovation forum which is sort of a part of the SDG forum in New York is one arena where things could come

up. But generally, be part of different dialogues, partnerships.”

Active knowledge dissemination closely aligned with the SDGs and communication of **people impact stories** was also cited by some interviewees as a way that IDRC could effectively demonstrate evidence of progress towards achieving the SDG targets.

“There is lot to be made in terms of making known the success stories and the best practice and lessons learned from the actual implementation by others in the developing and developed world, especially in terms of successfully bringing together international and domestic implementation.”

3 Attributes of Leading Funders and Learning for IDRC

3.1 Perceptions of Leading Funders of Research for Development

A large number of institutions and organizations were named by interviewees as world-leading funders of research for development, with **the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Department for International Development (DFID), the Rockefeller Foundation, the Wellcome Trust and the Ford Foundation** being the most frequently mentioned.

A full list of all organizations and institutions considered as peers for research and development impact and influence can be found in **Appendix 2**.

“There are a number of very big players. You have the Gates Foundation and the Wellcome Trust. Then I would say there is DFID who is certainly also a major funder. The European Commission is also a very large funder of research for development either directly or through the EDCTP [European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership].”

“On the bilateral side, on the development agency side, I think the Europeans have been pretty good at funding research. On the private foundation side, obviously, there is Bill Gates. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation must be one of the largest funders of development research in the world.”

3.1.1 Attributes of Successful Funders

Key attributes that interviewees gave as reasons why they considered leading funding institutions successful and effective was firstly the **sheer size and large scale of their ambitions** followed by the **collaborative nature** of the way that they manage their funds, which enables them to better **determine goals that resonate with the communities they are addressing** in order to make a big difference.

“I think one of the core attributes that the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation brings is just the size of their envelope, but I think probably equally important is the highly focused nature of their funding. They know precisely at the beginning exactly what are the outcomes and impacts that they’re looking for, largely from a quantitative side.”

“One of them is the complementary mandates of the big development outfits and the weight they have in resources, but the challenges they have in other ways.”

“My organization works with The World Bank to deliver internships for students between India and Canada, and that partnership has worked very well. It has allowed us to really connect with the Indian community in ways that would be much more complicated working through their government.”

Other attributes considered as being important include a **long-term approach** focusing on building and optimizing capacities in specific areas, but also ensuring that **new projects build on outcomes from**

previous projects. The UK Global Challenges Research Fund was mentioned as an example of a long-term investment to **support interdisciplinary research and impact-related work** around major global challenges.

“One of the things is the level of funding, which means that they are capable of financing a variety of projects over usually a rather long duration. Second is that they have very systematic competition and evaluation processes, whereby they succeed in selecting and keeping with projects that really make a difference.”

Independence from a research perspective was also considered to be important, particularly from those keen on generating knowledge and having the space and capacity to do that with ideas that speak to particular global challenges. **Knowledge of the region** and of the country context is also very important.

In terms of research funding, finding a balance between making sure it is vigorous, robust and cutting-edge was cited as another important attribute – this is to ensure it gives **sufficient freedom to researchers** to go where the interesting questions are or to make sure that what comes out is policy-relevant and actionable. A willingness to **support innovation and new thinking** was also considered to be a key attribute.

“I think it’s the size of their funding. All of them have committed to particular objectives, for example the Gates Foundation is focused on reducing maternal and child deaths and also selected infectious diseases. The NIH have several institutions and a broad work program that looks globally and increasingly thinks about how to do global efforts. And the Wellcome Trust is very similar. So, I think the key

distinguishing feature is their size and their focus on large-scale research and interventions, intervention research, in particular.”

“All of the ones [funders] I mentioned are successful, but in very different ways. For example, the Wellcome Trust seems quite focused on what they want to achieve. They fund things over a long period of time, at sizable levels of funding, to achieve a particular outcome. Whereas maybe for the US government and USAID particularly, and for the British government, their funding is not so much high-quality academic research, but research that’s intended to influence policies and programming.”

3.1.2 What Sets the IDRC Apart?

While IDRC is viewed by many as a small player, the organization is well known for having a large voice because they are highly respected for supporting institution building.

“IDRC is a ‘jewel’ in Canada’s crown. It is the only crown corporation we have in the realm of international assistance and I think they are unique as such. When I’ve traveled internationally and I’ve also represented Canada in this field, they’ve always been known and respected worldwide. And I think this has to do with these strong networks that IDRC has built, especially things like the Think Tank Initiative, for example, which involves 43 different think tanks all over the world. So, I think they have a breadth of contact and alliances that become very effective.”

“I wish it [IDRC] were bigger and had more funding, because I think it plays an incredible important niche that others don’t. I really do think the work they do gets forgotten about or left behind, or is lower priority and for that aspect of knowledge and knowledge generation, they really are a leader. They have been consistent. They’ve

always wanted to focus on building capacity. I would encourage them to do more of the same, on a bigger scale.”

Wide Array of Expertise and Strategic Vision

The IDRC is viewed very positively for its tradition and its brand, as being one of the world’s leading institutions around development policy. Their wide focus on development, not just on policy and education, is acknowledged for being varied and concerned with a plethora of research areas.

IDRC is perceived to have strategic objectives in practical areas, with a clear focus on work in research areas and knowledge creation to help build partnerships and leaders.

“Well, I think they have a high visibility. I think their role is fairly well understood, research and development and the many organizations that focus on research, intent to development, so I think they are pretty unique from that point of view.”

Cutting-edge Research

IDRC is considered to be at the forefront of a majority of the agenda items and is well recognized for its early work in areas such as gender, transparency in governance, impacts of technology, and fresh water management, as well as looking at the relationship between agricultural communities and public health.

IDRC is known for its work on looking at some of the issues around sustainability, such as sustainable food systems and climate change, and funding the linkages between ecosystems and nutrition.

“What IDRC does, is that they will often be early funders of initiatives. Just to give you

an example, there is a very important measure in our field now called the multidimensional poverty measure. It is a measure that is getting a lot of attention these days and IDRC actually funded this methodology in the early, early days because these things take ten years. The livestock vaccine, for example, or the Ebola vaccine, IDRC funds innovations early on and I think this also helps its reputation.”

According to some, IDRC is perceived to take more risks and fund areas or projects that are not considered to be such safe bets.

“I’m very proud of the IDRC because they took a risk. They are the first ones to do the early funding of think tanks in developing countries – especially in African countries.”

“What IDRC used to do really well was to pick transformative, interesting projects and fund them. They were seen to have had a catalytic effect on research in development, research for development, and the whole development field as a result. They were justifiably highly respected for this.”

Rigorous Approach to Capacity Building

IDRC’s research on capacity building is acknowledged as being quite a distinctive attribute of their very rigorous approach. They are seen to be well connected to policy and having a very clear focus on policy, on social change and the broader social impacts that research can have.

IDRC are perceived to have a comprehensive consultative process in identifying and taking time to identify research gaps. They have a very good capacity-building system for not only researchers within their own organization, but also with other researchers who are associated with development research.

"I think the IDRC is good at generating diversity on their research side and really supporting organizations in the long run which is very important."

"They have a pretty strong emphasis on capacity building and on funding research from further south. I think that's certainly an important strength and trademark to have. Otherwise, my interaction with them has been mostly on things where they've collaborated with others together. They've made alliances, which I think has been good for them to leverage more resources."

Investing in Development – particularly in the Global South

One of the very important values that IDRC brings to the table is their investment in boosting local or regional capacities within countries, particularly in the Global South. From a monetary perspective, it is not considered to be a huge investment but the value-add of the investments in local capacity building has more long-term sustainable benefits which are considered to be invaluable. It is not considered helpful when people from the Global North are parachuted into a region to work on a project then leave, taking the skills and expertise with them.

"In Canada, IDRC have distinguished themselves because their mandate is to help the developing world so from that perspective they are unique. I think of IDRC more as helping the developing countries gain strength from within themselves which is a great strength."

"The big distinction for IDRC of course is its philosophy of supporting researchers in the Global South in low-income countries and prioritizing research that is responding to local concerns conducted and delivered by local partners and linked up to building the capacity of those local actors and research

institutions to be able to deliver it. That I think has been the hallmark of IDRC to many people."

A Focus on Generating Strong Research Communities

It is felt that the IDRC has been doing a good job of generating strong research communities. While they are not considered the largest funder, they are respected for spotting and building relationships with good people and building social capital.

The IDRC is also seen as being an effective and complimentary partner to many other funding organizations

"My outsider's view of IDRC is that they are also very important in terms of investing in research and they are known for wanting to invest in building capacity of local researchers or researchers in developing countries, which I think is a really important goal. When we think of funding with IDRC, we think about making sure we have that partnership between some international and developing country researchers. Or, if we want to try to find funding for some type of capacity-building product or initiative then we would come to IDRC."

One respondent mentioned that the IDRC is a place where one could look for resources, not necessarily just monetary, but look for things that are published.

"They have significantly more subject matter expertise, than most of the organizations that I have described as funders. And they prioritize the capacity strengthening aspect of research, so that they're simultaneously trying to generate valuable knowledge that's relevant for policy and programmatic decisions."

IDRC are also recognized for their investment in innovation and knowledge building, as well as investment in training the trainers unlike many other organizations. IDRC's focus on decision-makers to ensure that they are part of the programs to secure buy-in is also considered an important attribute of the organization.

"IDRC has been a visionary in supporting some of these innovative approaches, translating research findings into healthcare, policy, prevention. From that perspective, IDRC has wealth. Allows you to get better bang for buck."

Leveraging Generational Change

IDRC is acknowledged for having a fellowship with young researchers. Even at times when funds were limited, IDRC was able to keep young researchers in-house. A lot of innovation comes from the next generation of thinkers and keeping this generational link is very important for success. Some believe the IDRC should consider scaling this up to increase their impact in the future.

3.1.3 What IDRC Can Learn from Other Funders

One of the things that IDRC can learn from other leading research for development institutions is the **way in which it chooses the topics on which to focus**. Topics should not simply be chosen from an academic or resources point of view. Experts feel IDRC should consider **research topics that are very real** in terms of the challenges faced in-country, and where development workers and institutions, governments, private sector and other stakeholders are **seeking answers**.

"I don't have a very clear sense of IDRC in terms of what its strategic direction is, what

exactly it wants to achieve, in a particular topic. I think the Gates Foundation is very, very clear about what they want to achieve and how they want to achieve it."

A recommendation for IDRC is to **create stronger relationships** with local governments, civil society and academia and more on the ground connections. Strong links are seen as critical to create synergy and innovation. **Being innovative** is also seen as a way to become more **effective in creating impact**.

"I think nimbleness is one thing. I would very, very strongly suggest more involvement, more association. More work along with the countries and with the country government and so forth. Not doing work in isolation of a country government."

"They can learn something from NIH by looking at the institution as a whole, because if your funding is going to an institution, you want to ensure that they have instructors, they have a research office. They need to have an office of research that is functioning very well to be able to manage the funds and the project that you put there. They bring people who will go back and really re-structure the office of research and make it very functional."

"I think IDRC can benefit from collaborating more with other funding agencies. For example, the tri-agencies and NSERC, CIHR and they do a little bit but when I think about what we did with NCIRCUS it was a very small collaboration and I think there is a lot more that we can do. Since IDRC is federal, I think there's a lot of these provincial dynamics and spending organizations and I think IDRC is seeking to do things in climate change, technology and innovation and they can benefit more with working with other agencies, nationally and internationally."

According to one respondent, a natural comparative advantage for IDRC would be to **further exploit their capacity** for delivering cutting-edge research by **broadening their networks**, especially in the developing world.

Policy dialogue is considered to be crucial, particularly in creating learning groups to close the gap between research and policy-making. It is recommended that IDRC **establish learning processes and groups** to bring together policy-makers and leaders of organizations with researchers to share knowledge and **work together to solve complex issues**.

“Let’s work together with a group that comes up with a problem, and then returns and meets again a couple of months later. And then there’s new pieces of research evidence that is shared, that’s debated, and so on.”

“Everyone’s drowning in information, deluged with strategies, and reports and projects. It’s very hard to develop time-efficient ways in which organizations can learn from each other. I think IDRC’s approach of partnering, particularly with institutions in Africa or in developing countries is a strong one and a good one. I think that’s where the opportunities for shared experience and learning come from. It’s easy to see that as more of one-way imparting information from IDRC, or commission organizations into Africa or wherever it is. But in reality, it’s absolutely a two-way learning, and IDRC does that pretty well, I think.”

“IDRC should continue on the policy research focus that they have, because we don’t have a lot of that. A lot of research is coming out but not a lot is being fed in. They should not withdraw from this. They are funding an interesting initiative of pulling players together in Africa to create learning

platforms – it will be interesting to see what comes out of that.”

When compared to other leaders of the field, it was suggested that IDRC should scale up, funding larger projects that help to **improve and develop research centres and initiating partnerships that focus on large geographic areas**.

Finally, while IDRC is highly regarded for its excellence and clarity of processes, it was suggested that perhaps it should **put in place some flexibility and adaptability** which might in times of crises help the organization react faster to new and unexpected needs.

“I have had direct hands-on experience with IDRC during the Ebola crisis and funding for Ebola research. One thing which is at the same time a strength and maybe a weakness also for IDRC is that they have very well-qualified procedures for calls for proposals, evaluations. But they seem to be lacking a system in which in terms of emergency they are able to adapt their processes, which I would see a difference from, for example, the Wellcome Trust.”

3.1.4 Thoughts on How IDRC Can Do Better to Be Seen as a Thought Leader Internationally on Research for Development

One of the recommended actions that IDRC could take to be seen as a thought leader internationally on research for development is to **be more present and visible and actively engage with people**, as well as **play a key role as a convener of stakeholders and partners**.

“I think that despite the fact that IDRC has a mandate to deliver to the Canadian government, they should also be very much open to new types of partnerships. I think

doing partnerships with similar organizations to encourage complementarity and capacity exchange. It is really important that they can diversify their partnership base.”

The IDRC should also **communicate more about the things that they do**, so that the Canadian public in particular can appreciate the work that is being done. The timing is considered to be good right now, because the Canadian government is open to creating a knowledge-based society, particularly around complex, thorny issues such as migration, climate change, gender equity, and sustainability.

“The whole idea of analyzing and discussing future trends to try to get way ahead of the curve would be one, without question. Their international engagement, their representation for Canada, their stress on their unique role, it has earned them huge respect around the world.”

Continuing to increase their role in **capacity building and supporting and advancing research in the Global South** was also mentioned. Many also feel IDRC is well placed to interact more with donors who may be new to the development area, by being part of local meetings to showcase and

provide examples of funding models that are successful.

“I think their impact really is more about the network of think tanks that they are building around the world and I think that is an important impact and contribution. And I think their impact is also helping developing countries themselves increase their research capacity in their universities.”

A final recommendation was for IDRC to **focus on developing their narrative and telling a story to create a sense of urgency, as well as providing evidence of results achieved.**

“They are doing a good job in Canada and are close to the people but they need to demonstrate their impact better and look at how others evaluate their impact.”

“We live in a very dynamic world thanks to mass communication and the dynamic nature of society. Things move very quickly so you really have to be not one, two, but three steps ahead of what the expectations are. Capturing that is complicated if you’re reaching out to different countries, different topics, different research areas.”

4 Current Trends in Funding Modalities and Lessons Learned

Interviewees were asked for their views on some of the innovative ways that leading funders of development research make the most out of the funding that they have.

4.1 Predominant Funding Modalities

The most common modality by far is still direct grant giving, but partnership models are increasing.

Grant funding is still considered the most dominant modality in the development research world, and grants are still believed to be effective due to the fact that most projects are time-bound in nature with a specific output and some flexibility.

However, a general takeaway is that good research needs to avoid approaches that are very rigid and solely outcome driven. There needs to be some flexibility and space to adjust course and potentially explore new questions as one progresses through the project.

“Provided you have good portfolio management, then I think grant funding is still a very efficient and effective way to go, and it’s by far the dominant modality in our world, and for good reason.”

“One modality we should look at more is call funding or institutional funding or flexible funding, whatever you want to call it. It can’t just be donors who sit in their ivory towers and determine what the issues are that need to be researched or

which of the development areas they want to make an impact in.”

Leading funders who work through partnerships tend to take a more long-term approach, but it is felt that unless there was a large amount of funding provided, the partnership could become difficult to manage and skew resources away from delivering the highest quality research.

“Building the capacity of whole organizations to do good research and policy-related research – that organizational capacity is really important. It’s something we’ve been doing through learning partnerships or with donor agencies or big civil society organizations. Running programs which try to take organizations on learning journeys around specific topics, building organizational capacity.”

According to some, innovation in funding modalities in the realm of research has not been done as much as it could have been or as much as it has been in other sectors. There is a lot of talk about blended financing to use official development assistance to leverage funds from the private sector, but actual applied blended finance examples are still fairly rare due to the complexity that it entails.

“We’ve been looking at different partnerships with the World Economic Forum, a couple of international global companies. It’s not so much innovative as it is looking at partners in financing.”

An increase in the types of recipients and collaboration

Recipients of funding that are most frequently mentioned are research institutions such as universities or think tanks, predominantly in developed countries; especially those with the best track record in their particular area. However, increasingly some funders are starting to cast their nets a bit wider and are asking for non-academic recipients such as individuals from civil society or practitioners who can complement the experience of their academic counterparts and ensure that the results of the research are actionable on the ground.

Nearly all stakeholders that we have spoken with agree that there is definitely more scope for partnerships, particularly between different disciplines. Not only do partnerships build up a larger funding pool, they also build up research capacity for all those involved. However, some do caution that partnerships do not always work and that funders need to think hard about the project objectives, benefits and risks of partnering with another organization.

“I think there is a lot of talk and experimentation. Some of these partnerships work and some of these partnerships don’t work. It is difficult to say to do more or to do less. It is just to say that partnership per se is not always a magic bullet but can in some instances actually really yield some fresh insights.”

Collaborating more with traditional funders of research – for example national research councils – was seen as a way to mobilize funding to make sure that joint projects are created, especially projects where researchers from low income countries are

able to participate on an equal basis with other researchers.

Partnerships with the private sector and commercialization of research

Some see clear opportunities for partnerships with the private sector, although some believe this is most effective when it is product-related and can lead to something that can be commercialized (such as vaccines) or is solutions-oriented to help with making business decisions.

“If your research definitely leads to a commercial outcome, an actual, viable entity, then it makes sense to do it with a loan. But if you honestly think that the outcome of the product that you’re investing in is knowledge, you are not going to do any favors by putting in a loan or other kind of structures. So, in that case, grants are absolutely the most appropriate way to fund.”

A pay-on-results model is mentioned by one expert, but it is largely when the private sector is involved and does not suit basic research very well.

For innovations that are highly commercial in nature, spin-off companies could be created to adopt a commercialization approach to get a research proposal to market, but this is viewed as being incredibly rare in the research for development space.

Bringing new voices together

One emerging modality that has been mentioned is the large **consortium which takes a problem and asks a group of research organizations to come together and pool their relevant expertise** from

different disciplines, which leads to collaboration across many sectors. The Gates Foundation is perceived to be doing more of this multi-disciplinary and multi-stakeholder type of research. However, the challenge with this modality is that it can be difficult to find expertise or mechanisms to measure outcomes at different levels of the system, so one needs a strong multi-disciplinary network. Furthermore, organizations that have specific strengths or expertise in a particular region should join forces with organizations that have strengths in other complimentary areas; essentially, organizations should maximize their comparative advantage.

Another modality mentioned is where an **established research organization or university collaborates with very local partners in the Global South**. This could be universities research institutions, civil society or those not in the conventional academic sector. An approach would then be developed where the research is co-designed from both bringing together expertise from the academic side and the practitioner perspective; those who actually have the capacity to make change happen on the ground. Participants would co-design the research, co-collect the data and co-communicate the findings. In these types of arrangements, it is stressed that the partnerships between Northern and Southern researchers should be on equal footing throughout every phase.

A final important point to mention: researchers from low-income countries often have very little national funding for research, and as such they cannot participate in global fora or discussions on

specific research topics without additional funding or through partnerships. The **lack of more voices from the Global South at conferences, in consortia**, etc. is seen as a limitation and many feel more funding support in this area would be beneficial.

"We have two broad types of small partnerships. We have the partnerships where they are a partner country, and we develop ten-year contracts with each of our partner countries where we jointly identify the research priorities for that country. Then we look against those research priorities which have scientific capability, and we come up with a research program that matches the country's science capability to the research needs of that country."

"Something around the modalities that desperately needs to change in terms of money is that more and more of these development donors want to write fewer and fewer bigger and bigger checks. They are not going to have the institutional capacity terminated, so we will have money in smaller amounts to work from lots of partners so we are going to have to find the modalities."

"We've not used modality in research enough. But as a director of a research division, some of the new areas that I see that we need more research include blended financing for research, not so much the specific topic area. I think that in the past, we were doing a lot of funding in specific sectors, for example agriculture and health. This whole area of innovation financing, it is itself an area where we need more research."

Appendix 1: Methodology and Sample

GlobeScan scheduled and conducted 46 in-depth telephone interviews, lasting up to 45 minutes with high-level experts in the field of R4D from around the world. The interviews took place between September 22nd and November 6th.

The IDRC prepared the sample list and carefully hand selected potential participants to ensure a good balance across disciplines.

GlobeScan and the IDRC collaboratively developed the discussion guide with the goal of addressing the four key questions of this project.

22 interviews were conducted with individuals who were identified as research leaders, thought leaders and peers within Canada and internationally. 24 interviews were conducted with sector specialists in the areas of technology and innovation, agriculture and environment, climate change, health and environment, inclusive growth, health and maternal child health and governance and justice. The tables below list all participants of this study.

GENERALISTS		
CANADIAN RESEARCH LEADERS AND THOUGHT LEADERS		
Alejandro Adem	CEO and Scientific Director	Mitacs
Bettina Hamelin	President and CEO	Ontario Genomics
Ted Hewitt	President	Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council
		Development Research and Learning at Global Affairs Canada – GAC
Lilly Nicholls	Director	Aga Khan Foundation Canada
Khalil Shariff	CEO	Grand Challenges Canada
Karlee Silver	VP Programs	IDRInternational Institute for Sustainable Development
Scott Vaughan	President and CEO	

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AND THOUGHT LEADERS		
Thomas Chupein	Senior Policy Manager; Program Manager	Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) MIT
Mamadou Biteye	Managing Director	Rockefeller Foundation (Africa)
Ngozi Okonjo Iweala	Former Minister of Finance	Nigeria
Homi Kharas	Brookings Institution	Former World Bank
Dr. Suneeta Krishnan	India Country Lead	Measurement, Learning, and Evaluation, Gates Foundation
Melissa Leach	Director	Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex
Simon Maxwell	Senior Research Associate	Overseas Development Institute
Thandika Mkandawire	Professor	London School of Economics
Danny Sriskandarajah	Secretary General	CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
Guido Schmidt-Traub	Executive Director	Sustainable Development Solutions Network
PEER ORGANISATIONS		
Andrew Campbell	CEO	Australian Centre for International Agriculture Research
Ruth Levine	Program Director	Global Development and Population, Hewlett Foundation
Peter Piot	Director	School and a Professor of Global Health.
Anna Maria Oltorp	Head of unit for research cooperation	Swedish International Development Agency
Pio Wennubst	Assistant Director General	SDC Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SPECIALISTS		
TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION		
Carolina Rossini	Global Connectivity Policy Manager	Facebook
Kamal Bhattacharya	Chief Innovation Officer	Safaricom
Michael Spence	Professor	New York University

AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT		
Nick Austin	Director	Agricultural Development, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
Jessica Fanzo	Professor	Johns Hopkins University
Anna Larrey	Director of Nutrition	Food and Agriculture Organization
Purvi Mehta	Deputy Director	Head of Agriculture (South Asia), Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
Rachel Nugent	Vice President	Global Noncommunicable Diseases, RTI International
CLIMATE CHANGE		
Fatima Driouech	Head of National Climate Centre	Morocco
Peter Holmgren	Director General	Centre for International Forestry Research
David Howett	Senior Policy Adviser and Policy Lead	Global Resilience Partnership
Ravi Prabhu	Deputy Director General	World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF)
HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT		
Dr. Luis Cuervo Amore & Dr. Gisele Almeida	Senior Advisor & Advisor	Research Promotion and Development & Health Systems and Policy Research, PAHO/WHO
Marie-Paule Kieny	Deputy Director General	World Health Organization
Virgilio Viana	Director General	Amazonas Sustainable Foundation
INCLUSIVE GROWTH		
Louise Arbour	Special Representative for International Migration	United Nations
Stephan Klasen	Professor	University of Göttingen
Helga Fogstad	Executive-Director	The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health
Huda Zurayk	Professor	American University of Beirut
HEALTH & MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH		
Ian Askew	Director, Department of Reproductive Health and Research	WHO
Prabhat Jha	Faculty Member	University of Toronto
Masuma Mamdani	Senior Researcher	Tanzania Ifakara Health Institute
GOVERNANCE AND JUSTICE		
Pedro Abramovay	Regional Director	Open Society Foundations Latin America
Adam Crawford	Professor	University of Leeds

Appendix 2: Full List of Leading Funding Institutions

- African Economic Research Council (AERC), Kenya (1 mention)
- Amref Health Africa, South Africa (1 mention)
- Asian Development Bank (ADB), Philippines (1 mention)
- Australian Centre for International Agriculture Research (ACIAR), Australia
- Australian Research Council (ARC), Australia (1 mention)
- Barrington (University of North Carolina - UNC Global), USA
- Carnegie Foundation, USA (1 mention)
- CAST, USA (1 mention)
- Center for Applied Rationality (CFAR), USA (1 mention)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), USA
- Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Canada (3 mention)
- Department for International Development (DFID), UK (17 mentions)
- Ecosystems Services and Poverty Alleviation (ESPA), UK (1 mention)
- Ellen MacArthur Foundation, UK (1 mention)
- European Commission, Belgium (2 mention)
- Ford Foundation, USA (9 mentions)
- Gates Foundation (USA) (19 mentions)
- German Government (2 mentions)
- Global Affairs Canada, Canada (1 mention)
- Global Challenges Research Fund, UK (5 mentions)
- Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, USA (1 mention)
- Hewlett Foundation, USA (4 mentions)
- IBM Foundation (1 mention)
- Irish Aid, Ireland (1 mention)
- International Monetary Fund (IMF), USA (2 mentions)
- Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), USA (1 mention)
- Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD), France (1 mention)
- International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Italy (1 mention)
- JAISE (Journal of Ambient Intelligence and Smart Environment), Germany (1 mention)
- Laura and John Arnold Foundation, USA (1 mention)
- MacArthur Foundation, USA (6 mentions)
- McConnell Foundation, Canada (1 mention)
- Medical Research Council (MRC), UK (2 mentions)
- National Institutes of Health (NIH), USA (4 mentions)
- Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NOW), Netherlands (3 mentions)
- Newton Fund British Council, UK (1 mention)
- Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI), Norway (2 mentions)
- Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), France (2 mentions)
- Omidyar Network, USA (1 mention)
- Open Society Foundation, USA (1 mention)
- Rockefeller Foundation, USA (12 mentions)
- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, Canada (1 mention)

- Swedish International Development Centre (SIDA), Sweden (4 mentions)
- Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC), Switzerland (1 mention)
- Syngenta Foundation, Switzerland (1 mention)
- The Research Council of Norway, Norway (1 mention)
- The ELMA Foundation, USA (1 mention)
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), USA (1 mention)
- United Nations (UN), USA (5 mentions)
- United States Agency for International Development (USAID), USA (6 mentions)
- University of Southern California (USC), USA (1 mention)
- Wellcome Trust, UK (9 mentions)
- World Bank, USA (4 mentions)
- World Health Organization (WHO), Switzerland (1 mention)